



## Grand Valley State University Athletics Department's Policy on Transgender Student-Athlete Inclusion

### Grand Valley State University Athletics Department Non-Discrimination Statement:

GVSU Athletics goes beyond our University's mandates on equity and is committed to creating an environment of inclusion and the highest sense of belonging for its staff and student-athletes. Inclusion is a central pillar of the GVSU Athletics Impact Plan to integrate championship excellence into everything we do. We work to continuously address issues of equity, diversity and multiculturalism, engaging in practices and supporting policies that reflect the belief that our Athletics Department will thrive only via a more democratic and inclusive work community. This commitment is fully aligned with the GVSU institutional framework of intersectional social justice as well as its non-discrimination policies. These policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, color, gender, national origin, physical impairment, political affiliation, race, religion, or sexual orientation in the application of the all employment-related and program policies and procedures.

Aligned with the University's commitment to non-discrimination, inclusion and equal opportunity, the Athletic Department provides access for transgender student-athletes to participate on our varsity teams. It is our mission to provide an environment where transgender student-athletes feel safe, valued, respected and supported. Those associated with the GVSU Athletic Department are expected to commit themselves to this ethos by recognizing and understanding their own biases in how they receive and process information related to gender identity and expression. By doing so, we hope to foster a more inclusive athletic environment that acknowledges and honors the differences in each of our own identities.

**Staff and student-athletes of the Athletics Department are encouraged to use appropriate language and terminology. As a department, we respect a person's right to self-identify, and we encourage our community to politely ask a person how they identify if they are unsure. The definitions listed below reflect common terminology that may be referenced within the policy. Though robust, this is not an exhaustive list; we recognize that language is constantly evolving and will continue to update the list and our shared understanding of terminology.**

### Glossary of Terms:

- **AFAB:** Acronym meaning Assigned Female at Birth. AFAB people may or may not identify as female some or all of the time.
- **AMAB:** Acronym meaning Assigned Male at Birth. AMAB people may or may not identify as male some or all of the time. *(See Gender)*
- **Banned Substances:** NCAA Bylaw 31.2.3 identifies testosterone as a banned substance,

and provides for medical exception review for demonstrated need for use of a banned medication. It is the responsibility of the NCAA institution to submit the request for a medical exception (see [www.ncaa.org/drugtesting](http://www.ncaa.org/drugtesting)) for testosterone treatment prior to the student-athlete competing while undergoing treatment. In the case of testosterone suppression, the institution must submit written documentation to the NCAA of the year of treatment and ongoing monitoring of testosterone suppression.

- **Dead-naming:** Occurs when an individual, intentionally or not, refers to the name that a transgender or gender-expansive individual used at a different time in their life. Avoid this practice, as it can cause trauma, stress, embarrassment, and even danger. Some may prefer the terms birth name, given name, or old name.
- **FTM:** A trans male/masculine person who was assigned female at birth.
- **Gender:** A set of social, psychological, and/or emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual along a spectrum of man, woman, both, or neither.
- **Gender-Affirming Surgery (GAS):** Surgical procedures that can help people adjust their bodies to more closely match their innate gender identity. Not every transgender person will desire or have resources for surgery. This term should be used in place of the older term sex change. Also sometimes referred to as sexual reassignment surgery (or SRS), genital reconstruction surgery, or medical transition.
- **Gender Dysphoria:** The distress caused when a person's assigned sex at birth and assumed gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSMV), the term "...is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults."
- **Gender Expression:** The manner in which a person communicates their gender to others through external means such as clothing, hair-styles, appearance, and/or mannerisms. While most people's understandings of gender expressions relate to masculinity and femininity, there are countless combinations that may incorporate both masculine and feminine expressions—or neither—through androgynous expressions. An individual's gender expression does not automatically imply one's gender identity.
- **Gender Identity:** One's deeply held core sense of being a woman, man, some of both, or neither. One's gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex. Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced very early in life, but may also shift over the course of one's life.
- **LGBTQ+:** An acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. It is sometimes stated as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) or GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender). The addition of the Q for

queer is a more recently preferred version of the acronym as cultural opinions of the term focus increasingly on its positive, reclaimed definition, which recognizes more fluid identities; and as a move towards greater inclusivity for gender-expansive people. The Q can also stand for questioning, referring to those who are still exploring their own sexuality and/or gender. The “+” represents those who are part of the community, but for whom LGBTQ does not accurately capture or reflect their identity.

- **Misgender:** To refer to someone, especially a transgender or gender-expansive person, using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, which does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.
- **Mixed Team:** A mixed team is a varsity intercollegiate sports team on which at least one individual of each gender competes. (Revised: 5/8/06) NCAA Bylaw 18.02.2 for purposes of meeting the required minimums set forth in Bylaws 18.2.3 and 18.2.4, a mixed team shall be counted as one team. A mixed team shall count toward the minimum sponsorship percentage for men’s championships.
- **MTF:** A trans female/trans feminine person who was assigned male at birth. Often considered an over medicalized and somewhat outdated term.
- **Nonbinary:** Refers to individuals who identify as neither man or woman, both man and woman, or a combination of man or woman. It is an identity term which some use exclusively, while others may use it interchangeably with terms like genderqueer, gender creative, gender nonconforming, gender diverse, or gender expansive. Individuals who identify as nonbinary may understand the identity as falling under the transgender umbrella, and may thus identify as transgender.
- **Preferred or Chosen Names:** A preferred name (sometimes known as a chosen name, a nickname, or a name-in-use) is the use of a name, usually a first name, that is different from a person's legal name. There are many reasons why someone may use a preferred name. While the most visible may be to reflect gender identity, other reasons why someone might use a preferred name include using a nickname, going by an Americanized name, or distinguishing oneself from someone with a similar name.
- **Pronouns:** The words used to refer to a person other than their name. Common pronouns are they/them, he/him, and she/her. Neopronouns are pronouns created to be specifically gender-neutral including xe/xem, ze/zir and fae/faer. Pronouns are sometimes called Personal Gender Pronouns, or PGPs. For those who use pronouns--and not all people do--they are not preferred, they are essential.
- **Transsexualism:** The desire to change anatomic sexual characteristics to conform physically with one’s perception of oneself as a member of the opposite sex.
- **Transgender:** Often shortened to trans. A term describing a person’s gender identity that does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender

identity. This word is also used as an umbrella term to describe groups of people who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression—such groups include, but are not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous. See above for common acronyms and terms including female to male (or FTM), male to female (or MTF), assigned male at birth (or AMAB), assigned female at birth (or AFAB), genderqueer, and gender expansive.

- **Transition:** A term sometimes used to refer to the process—social, legal, and/or medical—one goes through to discover and/or affirm one’s gender identity. This may, but does not always, include taking hormones; having surgeries; and changing names, pronouns, identification documents, and more. Many individuals choose not to or are unable to transition for a wide range of reasons both within and beyond their control. The validity of an individual’s gender identity does not depend on any social, legal, and/or medical transition; the self-identification itself is what validates the gender identity.

***This policy was written in accordance with the NCAA Guiding Principles, emerging Bylaws and updated Frameworks for sport participation and competition.***

Policies governing the participation of transgender and non-binary (TGNB) student-athletes should be informed by the following principles, and be included in the institution’s transgender student-athlete policy statement:

1. Participation in intercollegiate athletics is a valuable part of the education experience for all students.
2. TGNB student-athletes should have equal opportunity to participate in sports.
3. The integrity of women’s sports should be preserved.
4. Policies governing sports should be based on sound medical knowledge and scientific validity.
5. Policies governing sports should be objective, workable, and practicable; they should also be written, available and equitably enforced.
6. Policies governing the participation of transgender students in sports should be fair in light of the tremendous variation among individuals in strength, size, musculature, and ability.
7. The legitimate privacy interests of all student-athletes should be protected.
8. The medical privacy of transgender students should be preserved.
9. Athletics administrators, staff, parents of athletes, and student-athletes should have access to sound and effective educational resources and training related to the participation of transgender and gender-variant students in athletics.
10. Policies governing the participation of transgender students in athletics should comply with state and federal laws protecting students from discrimination based on sex, disability, and gender identity and expression.

In 2022, the NCAA updated its Bylaws and shifted its Frameworks for TGNB inclusion to a sport-by-sport approach, aligning with the [Olympic Movement \(PDF\)](#). GVSU Athletics has developed the following working policies in a rapidly evolving area, informed by the spirit of fairness, inclusion and safety outlined in the [NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes](#)

[Handbook](#). The policies will be updated in accordance with ongoing NCAA guidance and Division-specific mandates for inclusion.

## Grand Valley State University Athletics Department Transgender Student-Athlete Policy:

Transgender and Non-Binary (TGNB) student-athletes are welcomed to participate in GVSU Athletics in a sport that affirms their gender identity. GVSU Athletics reiterates its commitment to finding and ensuring pathways for access and full inclusion of TGNB student-athletes, while balancing the need for Laker Excellence, competitive standards and performance-related requirements. The NCAA Office of Inclusion and the Sport Science Institute released the [Gender Identity and Student-Athlete Participation Summit Final Report \(PDF\)](#). The report informs ongoing efforts to support inclusion, fairness, and the mental and physical health of TGNB student-athletes within GVSU Athletics.

To be eligible to compete in sanctioned events, TGNB student-athletes are subject to sport-specific regulations under the [2022 NCAA Transgender Student-Athlete Participation Policy](#) as determined by the national governing body of each sport. Sport-specific policies are subject to ongoing review and recommendation by the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports to the Board of Governors. (see [ncaa.org/transgender](http://ncaa.org/transgender) for more information about the implementation timeline).

*This is a working policy in a rapidly evolving area and as such will be subject to ongoing review and revision as circumstances, laws and regulations change.*

### Competing in NCAA-, GLIAC- and Other Sanctioned Events:

For a trans woman (MTF) student-athlete to be eligible to compete in an NCAA championship event in a women's sport, please refer to the [2022 NCAA Transgender Student-Athlete Participation Policy](#).

- No new eligibility requirements will be implemented for 2022 winter and spring regular season competitions (including conference championships).
- Beginning August 1, 2022, trans woman student-athletes will be required to meet both criteria for 2010 NCAA Policy and their sport standard.
- Beginning August 1, 2023, trans woman student-athletes will be required to meet their sport-specific standard twice annually, continuing through their eligibility.

The policy updates do not change eligibility requirements for a trans man (FTM) to compete in a 2022 NCAA winter or spring championship. However, consistent with the [2010 NCAA Transgender Participation Policy](#), if a trans man is receiving gender-affirming care that includes the use of an NCAA banned substance (e.g., testosterone therapy) the school must follow the NCAA Medical Exception Policy.

To ensure health, safety, eligibility and compliance with the aforementioned policies, TGNB student-athletes undergoing hormone treatments must do so under the guidance of a licensed

physician and consult directly with GVSU Athletics on a predetermined and ongoing basis.

### **Participation on Varsity Sports Teams**

TGNB student-athletes who are NOT undergoing hormone treatment OR have not yet completed that process per their sport's NGB policy:

1. Any TGNB student-athlete who is not undergoing hormone treatment related to gender transition may participate in varsity sports activities in accordance with their sex assigned at birth, balancing the need for competitive standards and performance-related requirements.
2. A trans man (FTM) student-athlete who is not being treated with testosterone related to gender transition may tryout to participate on a men's or women's team.
3. A trans women (MTF) student-athlete who is not undergoing testosterone suppression treatment related to gender transition OR has not completed that process may not compete on a women's team. These student-athletes may compete on a men's team OR be a non-competing participant with a women's team per Bylaw 14.1.10. Bylaw 14.1.10 allows for participation as long as the student-athlete remains eligible. If the student-athlete is practicing with the women's team, they will not be eligible for financial assistance, which includes room and board, tuition and fees, and books, and any other restrictions listed in Bylaw 14.1.10.
4. The NCAA Board of Governors has encouraged the divisions to allow for additional, future eligibility if a trans student-athlete loses eligibility based on policy changes, provided they meet future trans student-athlete eligibility requirements.

*This policy may also apply to student-athletes who identify as non-binary. The same policy requirements apply to student-athletes who identify as non-binary and wish to compete on a men's or women's team.*

### **Implementation Process for Student-Athletes Requiring Approval for Participation**

#### **A. The student's responsibility**

- In order to avoid challenges to a transgender student's participation during a sport season, a student-athlete who has completed, plans to initiate, or is in the process of taking hormones as part of a gender transition shall submit the request to participate on a sports team in writing to the Director of Athletics upon matriculation or when the decision to undergo hormonal treatment is made.
- The student shall submit a request to the Director of Athletics or their designee. The request shall include a letter from the student's physician documenting the student's intention to transition or the student's transition status if the process has already been initiated. This letter shall identify the prescribed hormonal treatment for the student's gender transition and documentation

of the student's testosterone levels, if relevant.

B. Grand Valley State University Athletics Department responsibility

1. The Director of Athletics or their designee and the Associate Athletics Director – Medical Services shall meet with the student to review eligibility requirements and procedure for approval.
2. The Director of Athletics or their designee shall notify the NCAA of the student's request to participate and/or compete, when applicable.
3. If a student's request is denied by the Director of Athletics or their designee, the decision must be automatically reviewed by a Transgender Participation Committee to be established by a school administrator. This committee shall be convened and its decision reported to the athletic director or his/her designee and the school administrator in a timely fashion.
  - i. This committee will include:
    - A health care professional, e.g. physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other licensed health professional with experience in transgender health care and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care. The student-athlete's physician can serve in this role.
    - The faculty athletic representative; and
    - The university Title IX Coordinator
  - ii. The athletic director or his/her designee will inform the NCAA of the review outcome.
4. GVSU and the Center for Drug Free Sport will confirm that the treatment requirement has been met.
5. GVSU may petition to the NCAA for transgender student-athletes, subject to a one-year transition period, to request an extension of their eligibility at the end of their transition period.
6. All discussions among involved parties and required written supporting documentation should be kept confidential, unless the student-athlete makes a specific request otherwise. All information about an individual student's transgender identity and medical information, including physician's information provided pursuant to this policy, shall be maintained confidentially.

## Additional Guidelines

### A. Facilities Access

1. Changing Areas, Toilets, Showers – Transgender student-athletes will be able to use the locker room, showers and toilet facilities consistent with the student's gender identity. Every effort will be made to have private, enclosed changing areas, showers and toilets for use by any athlete who desires them. When requested by the transgender student-athlete, GVSU will make every effort to provide separate changing, showering and toilet facilities for the student's use, however transgender student-athletes may not be required to use separate facilities.
2. Competition at Another Institution – If a transgender student-athlete requires a particular accommodation to ensure access to appropriate changing, showering or bathroom facilities, the GVSU Athletics Director or their designee, in consultation with the transgender student-athlete, may notify their counterparts at other institutions prior to competition to ensure that the student has access to facilities that are comfortable and safe. **This notification should maintain the student-athlete's confidential identity as a transgender person and will not be disclosed without the student-athlete's permission.**
3. Hotel Rooms – Transgender student-athletes may be assigned to share hotel rooms based on their gender identity, with recognition that any student who needs extra privacy should be accommodated whenever possible.

### B. Dress Codes and Team Uniforms

1. Dress Codes – While representing the institution, transgender student-athletes will be permitted to dress consistently with their gender identities, while conforming to GVSU athletic department standards.
2. Uniforms – All team members will have access to uniforms that are appropriate for their sport and that they feel comfortable wearing. No student-athlete will be required to wear a gendered uniform that conflicts with the student-athlete's gender identity.

## Enforcement and Non-Retaliation

- A. Enforcement – Any member of the GVSU athletics department who has been found to have violated this policy by threatening to withhold athletic opportunity or harassing any student on the basis of their gender identity or expression, or by breaching medical confidentiality will be subject to disciplinary action. Any member of the athletics department who becomes aware of conduct that violates this policy should immediately report the conduct to the Athletics Director. A



[formal report](#) will be made through the appropriate office as it relates to the specific violation of this policy.

- Withholding of athletic opportunity/harassment: Office of Inclusion & Equity and Title IX
- Breaching medical confidentiality: Athletic Director

*Of note, all employees of the Athletics Department (except those who serve in non-supervisory clerical capacities) are mandatory reporters as identified by the GVSU Title IX Office. This means that when a mandatory reporter is notified of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, stalking, intimate partner violence (dating/domestic violence), sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or gender-based harassment, they must immediately report the information to the Title IX Coordinator.*

- B. Retaliation – Retaliation is specifically forbidden against anyone who complains about discrimination based on gender identity or expression. The GVSU athletics department will take steps to prevent any retaliation against any person who makes such a complaint.
- C. Anti-Harassment Policy – Should this policy be violated; steps will be taken in accordance with the [University Anti-Harassment Policy](#).

## Education

- A. Athletic Department – All members of the athletic department will receive information and education about transgender identities, institutional and conference non-discrimination policies, the use of chosen names and pronouns, and expectations for creating a respectful team and school climate for all students, including transgender and gender-variant students.
- B. Student-Athletes – All student-athletes receive annual education on gender based violence based on a tiered educational model through a partnership with the Center for Women & Gender Equity.
- C. Conferences & Opposing Teams - Conferences and Federations that GVSU participates in will receive information and education about these GVSU policies. All GVSU-initiated game contracts/agreements will include language that summarizes this policy and GVSU's expectation regarding the treatment of all student-athletes, including those who may be transgender.
- D. Vendors & Visitors - All vendors and visitors to athletics events hosted by GVSU will have the opportunity to read GVSU Athletics' Fan Code of Conduct, which expressly prohibits language, behavior and signage that discriminates on the basis of gender and gender identity . This Fan Code of Conduct will be publicly displayed throughout GVSU Athletics facilities and online with fan guides.

## Media

- A. Confidentiality – Protecting the privacy of transgender student-athletes is a top priority for all athletics department and affiliated school personnel, particularly when in the presence of the media. All medical information shall be kept confidential in accordance with the applicable state, local and federal privacy laws.